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ABSTRACT

An alternative educational program, ADVANCE (Alternative Design for Vocational and Necessary Cognitive Education), was developed for emotionally disturbed secondary school students in New Jersey. To develop and modify social behaviors needed to complete academic and vocational training to facilitate a return to the mainstream of secondary educational programs, the program incorporates a behavior modification management program. Lessons are planned on a weekly basis according to the goals of each student's individualized education program. Critical elements of the program's transitional process include: preshop orientation through a prevocational program, behavioral match of student to program, vocational assessment of aptitude and interest, joint staff support, allowance for regression, and tracking in the mainstreamed environment through Child Study Team services. The program represents a successful model to address the unique difficulties presented by the emotionally disturbed within the traditional educational setting. (SB)

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TRANSITIONAL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING OF THE EMOTIONALLY HANDICAPPED

- A VALIDATED PROGRAM -

Presented at the International Council
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TRANSITIONAL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING OF THE EMOTIONALLY HANDICAPPED

- A VALIDATED PROGRAM -

Program Introduction

Paralleling field test results over a five-year period, a synthesis of several factors have resulted in an effective program that provides a full-time curriculum of services to the secondary level emotionally disturbed population.

Program results have demonstrated that careful motivational techniques within a traditional vocational and job-training framework can lead failure-oriented secondary students to successful career development channels. Packaging individualized plans beyond the normal limits of conventional Individual Educational Plans (IEPs), vocationally related academic skills and minimum job entrance skills are interwoven into a behavioral adjustment and ability assessment network. Demonstrating both educational and economic significance, the program delivers a system of expanded occupational training to the previously restricted population of the emotionally handicapped and chronically disruptive student. This program, which is completing the national validation process, is widely recognized receiving state validation early in its development. The program, which provides for academic development, vocational training and behavior modification, is operated as a separate entity within the county vocational school educational system for Salem County, New Jersey.

Program Origin

In 1975 a need was identified in Salem County, New Jersey for an alternative educational program to serve emotionally disturbed students. Local school districts were faced with the problem of either developing costly alternative programs within their home boundaries, or to transport students over long distances to private sector institutions which, in many cases, were not specifically designed to meet the needs of the emotionally disturbed population and which presented cost effective concerns in terms of transportation and tuitions. Based on this need, the Salem County Board for

Vocational Education was prevailed upon to develop a program not only to meet the academic and social needs of these individuals, but also to provide the opportunity for vocational education instruction. The Board was chosen as the most logical vehicle to provide these services because it was already providing recognized quality special needs education for handicapped and disadvantaged students in vocational education. The program was called A.D.V.A.N.C.E., an acronym which stands for Alternative Design for Vocational And Necessary Cognitive Education.

Population Served

Although initially designed to serve the emotionally handicapped population at the secondary level in the single county of Salem, the program now serves a tri-county area of over 1,200 square miles with a population of approximately 400,000 people. Of the students served, 25% live in an urban setting, with 75% residing in rural areas. Approximately 82% of the students served come from economically depressed families with the remainder of the students having lower-middle and middle income ratings.

All students in the program have been evaluated and classified by at least a three-member Child Study Team as being emotionally disturbed under the educational statutes of the state of New Jersey. These students have been referred to the A.D.V.A.N.C.E. Program as the least restrictive environment appropriate to their classification and individual need under the intent and mandates of Public Law 94-142. Specifically, these students have been excluded from the regular secondary programs of the comprehensive and vocational training schools. Since twenty-four hour residential placement is not the most appropriate least restrictive environment for these students, an alternative highly structured day program was designed to address behavioral and social modification required for these students to function in the community. Some of the characteristics of the students in the program include court ordered placement, the potential for incarceration, probation status, foster home placement, chronic truancy, and a high propensity toward violations leading to school suspensions.

Behavior Modification Management Program

With the prime goal of the program to develop and modify social behaviors needed to complete academic and vocational training and to facilitate a return to the mainstream of secondary educational programs, a sophisticated system of behavioral management is incorporated into all program components. Essentially, this element is based on the assessment and high frequency monitoring of five targeted behaviors for each student during the entire school day. The five targeted behaviors identified as those necessary for minimum functioning within the educational environment, are represented by the acronym CHADS. The acronym stands for Cursing or verbal acting out, Hitting or physical acting out, Assigned area or staying within the physical limitations of the training area, Daydreaming or disrupting, and Staying on the assigned task.[1] Lack of violations in these five targeted areas are recorded on a fifteen-minute frequency for each student by the teacher or classroom aide. This data is further converted into a point system which provides for immediate gratification toward more desirable non-consumable items. Through this high frequency and daily behavioral interaction, positive patterns of behavior are developed leading toward conditional and full mainstreaming status. The management system is further augmented through a timeout room that is used for the purpose of addressing preventative behavioral controls and a crisis assignment room. The crisis or workroom is an inhouse disciplinary center where students are removed from the regular classroom environment. Assigned point levels must be earned by the student for the opportunity to return to the classroom. The reinforcement system is further amplified by three levels of field trips from tours of local points of interest to attendance at professional sporting events. To provide for immediate feedback to students, individual points and behavioral levels are posted at the individual's learning carrel showing daily, weekly and monthly development through charted graphs. Crisis and therapeutic counseling is also integrated into the program for each student by the district's Non-traditional Child Study Team.

Curriculum (IEP-Based)

Up to eight students are assigned to a class with one teacher of the handicapped and up to eleven students may be assigned with the addition of a classroom aide. Students receive individualized instruction at their individual learning carrel work stations. On a weekly basis, lesson plans are developed for each student based on the goals of their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) in communication, computational and social living skills. In addition, students receive extensive training in prevocational and vocational development, along with a recreational/physical development program. Based on individual weekly lesson plans, students progress through a multitude of skill levels using a wide variety of instructional materials identified for their individual academic needs. Further, all students complete pre and post testing in five standardized tests covering communication and computational skills that are used to independently assess achievement on a yearly basis.

Vocational Training And Mainstreaming Mechanics

Degrees of difficulty have existed in effectively integrating emotionally handicapped students into special needs employment orientation and regular vocational training programs.[2] The design of A.D.V.A.N.C.E. has, however, allowed for a positive successful transition into these areas.

The critical elements of design in the transitional process include: Pre-shop orientation through a prevocational program, behavioral match of student to program, vocational assessment of aptitude and interest, joint staff support, allowance for regression and tracking in the mainstreamed environment through Child Study Team services.

Successful transitional preparation of the Emotionally Handicapped must address the measurement and development of behavior as a primary or first step in the sequence toward vocational training placement. Charting students' behaviors, measuring growth and response to the modification system provide the first cause to place students with unpredictable characteristics in an environment where safety concerns must be realistically addressed. Second, students for the first year normally complete a program of prevocational shop activities designed for orientation to basic hand and hand-power tools and

an orientation to vocational safety in an environment that field-tests behaviors for possible integration into regular vocational training programs. Third, impacting on mainstreaming is the critical need to identify the most appropriate vocational placement in terms of interest and aptitude and that placement that provides the highest probability of success. Here, two prime factors are addressed. The first being the traditional vocational assessment profile of the student and the second area being the behavioral match of the student to the behavioral climate of the specific vocational training program.

Addressing the vocational assessment, several perimeters are considered. The first is the assessment of the vocational readiness of the student through the prevocational shop during the first year program. The second is the results of a SINGER Vocational Aptitude Test to measure basic manipulative and mechanical gross motor skills. Assessment is further supplemented with the COATS or the Comprehensive Occupational Assessment Testing System. These results provide tendency and probability for students to succeed by matching the individual characteristic of the student to the characteristics of occupations or occupational clusters. This nucleus of data is further packaged with the behavioral properties of the student which are quantitatively matched through the behavioral mean for expectations of the training or specific occupational training environment. This process involves a prior assessment of the occupational environment by baselining the frequencies of violations of the five targeted behaviors which are specifically used in the assessment and modification of the A.D.V.A.N.C.E. student. Quantitative averages are assigned to each of the occupational training programs and then equated to the behavioral demonstrated average of the student. This permits a tangible and usable instrument to determine readiness for integration or mainstreaming from a behavioral basis that realistically accounts for the characteristics of the E. D. population.

Beyond the first year of the Program, students, based on the above criteria, are mainstreamed into either a two-year employment orientation program curriculum or regular two-year vocational training area. Within the orientation curriculum, the benefits of gradual orientation, along with specific development of job entrance skills, are provided.

Based on the further assessment of aptitude and ability, advanced vocational training for the second phase mainstreaming may take place for the E. D. student into regular vocational programs. However, this process does not preclude the student from prematurely advancing through the first phase directly into the second or regular vocational training program as the individual ability and potential of the student may dictate.

To provide follow-up within the mainstream environment, a Joint Staff Vocational Program is used to deliver further services. This practice includes a team-teaching situation whereby the traditional vocational education instructor is supported through the services of the teacher of the handicapped who is, in effect, mainstreamed with the student from the A.D.V.A.N.C.E. Program into the vocational environment. Through the expertise of the vocational instructor, occupational skills are developed by the mainstreamed individual with behavioral reinforcement and motivation supplemented by the teacher of the handicapped. Through the joint efforts of both instructional staff, the needs of the student are synergistically served.

The vocational development process is further supported through the functions of the Non-traditional Child Study Team role pioneered through needs and circumstances in the district. This role involves tracking student progress, interpretation and implementing the IEP, recommending educational materials and techniques, providing instructor in-service and consultation, parental liaison and therapeutic counseling targeted to the vocational environment.

Although assessment has shown significant success within the vocational training structure of the A.D.V.A.N.C.E. Program, several factors impact on bottom-line results. These include degree of emotional disturbance of the student and his compatibility with the day placement as the most appropriate least restrictive environment; the expertise of vocational staff toward effectively servicing mainstreamed E. D. students; the availability of support services through a Non-traditional Child Study Team concept; the degree of positive behavior modification prior to mainstreaming; and the availability of viable vocational training which is geared toward job placement

at all levels in the spectrum of occupational competencies. Consequently, it must be recognized that the E. D. emotionally handicapped student cannot be successfully prepared or trained independent of a comprehensive approach. This approach must reflect a collectivity of several elements involving emotional and behavioral elements, academic level, aptitude, interest, joint staff efforts and Child Study Team supportive roles.

Educational Significance

Successful demonstration of the educational services of the A.D.V.A.N.C.E. Program has been shown under the mandates of Public Law 94-142 relating to the least restrictive environment appropriate to classification and individual student needs.[3] However, more significantly, this program represents a successful model to address the unique difficulties presented by the emotionally disturbed within the traditional education setting. This has been achieved by successfully integrating several components which include an effective system for behavioral modification, prevocational development, the use of joint special needs and vocational staff instructional teams, quantitative based mainstreaming and supportive services by a functioning Non-traditional Child Study Team. In addition to serving the academic and vocational needs of this special population, the program has further been demonstrated as being cost effective. Because this is a validated model program, school districts with a need to deliver a viable program for this population should consider an alternative program such as this that will address behavioral adjustment, academic development,and vocational training. This type of program can realistically be considered utilizing existing facilities and staff with significant budgetary advantages.

School districts wishing to review or pursue adoption of the A.D.V.A.N.C.E. Program or its components may have access to the Administrative, Behavior Modification and Curriculum Manuals of the Program by writing to Director of the Division of Special Needs of the Salem County Vocational Technical Schools at 172 Salem-Woodstown Road, Salem, New Jersey 08079.

[1]William H. Adams, Raymond J. Bielicki, "Alternative Design for Vocational And Necessary Cognitive Education for Secondary Emotionally Disturbed Students." ERIC, April 1981, p. 7.

[2]William H. Adams, "Vocational Training That Works for the Emotionally Disturbed." PHI DELTA KAPPAN, (9-81), Vol.63, No.1, p.64.

[3]Adams, Bielicki, op.cit., p.32.